Red Cross Camera Men in Thrilling Adventures Abroa

Under Fire in Montenegro, Frostbitten in Siberia, Baked in Sahara, They Keep on Turning Crank---Filming Sultan's Harem

By HERBERT ASBURY.

THE summer sun poured its blistering rays upon the little Montenegrin town of Rieka as it stretched its sprawly length in a valley northwest of Lake Scutari. It is a typical Balkan village, with a long street on which fronted rows of mud houses baked hard by the sun and wind, with here and there a stone structure sticking out from the other buildings—imposing edifices in such surroundings, but in reality tottering, ramshackle affairs erected by masons whose zeal got the better of their judgment.

And the whole place was dismally, hopelessly dead. Now and then a shutter would bang, a door would slam somewhere in the town, and the scolding voice of a mother would be heard. But the only visible signs of life were a very small and very dirty boy driving a lazily grunting pig up the street and an equally small and dirty little girl who sat on the edge of the village watering trough and listlessly paddled her feet in the water. Except for these the town might have been the ruins of a prehistoric settlement.

Into this wilderness of silence and heat rumbled a venerable Balkan cart drawn by two ancient Montenegrin oxen and with Major Alexander F. Edouart and Major E. J. Swift, moving picture photographers for the American Red Cross, sitting precariously in the back, their equipment piled under and over and around them. The ox is a patient beast, with a singleness and fixity of purpose that passes belief, and these oxen were typical of their kind. They knew that in this village there was a great pump and hard by a great watering trough filled to the brim with cool, sweet water. They had felt the need of the refreshing fluid ever since they left Cattaro, eleven miles away, early in the morning, and it was now late in the afternoon. Their one purpose in life was to get to that water by the shortest and most direct route, therefore they plodded steadily onward in the middle of the road. They paid no more attention to the shouts and frenzied gesticulations of the driver who walked patiently beside them than if he hadn't existed.

They moved on down the village street to the market place, but neither the rattle and bump of the cart nor the shouts of the driver aroused the town from its slumbers. The boy with the pig did not even turn around; he presently disappeared beyond the confines of the village. Nothing that was alive remained in sight save the little girl who paddled her feet in the trough. She was still sitting there when the cart rumbled up, the oxen shoved their muzzles into the water alongside her feet, and the two Americans clambered to the ground. Then it occurred to her that there might be something of interest in the strangers, so curiously dressed in their khaki uniforms.

Life in a Montenegrin Village.

She removed her feet from the trough, stuck her thumb in her mouth and began an intensive study of the phenomena so fortunately presented to her. She became tremendously interested as the Americans began to unload from the cart various strange machines and instruments. She listened appreciatively, also, to the language of the strangers, which, alas, was not what her tender ears should have heard. Still, she could not understand it, although she recognized immediately that it was decidedly vigorous and explosive.

Major Edouart and Major Swift finally removed all of their moving picture machines and other belongings from the cart, and then Major Edouart felt impelled to give the contraption a hearty kick.

"If we could take this thing back home," he said, "and get it down to Coney Island, we could make the Bump-the-bumps concession look like thirty cents!"

"Don't joke about it," protested Major Swift. "That ride was a serious matter."

"We came here to take pictures of life in a Montenegrin village," Major Edouart went on, "but where is it?"

"Blow a whistle," suggested Major Swift.

Major Edouart grunted in disgust and turned to the small girl.

"Where are all the people?" he demanded, in Montenegrin.

The girl removed her thumb from her mouth, smeared her sleeve across her nose, scratched herself vigorously in half a dozen places, and suddenly let go a blast of language.

"She says," Major Edouart translated, "that they're all asleep."

"Well," Major Swift remarked, "we can take a picture of the town and the cart and the little girl, anyway."

They completed the setting up of the camera, and got ready to "shoot" the market place. But Major Edouart had no more than begun to turn the crank when the crack of a rifle shot broke the stillness, and then came another. The shots seemed to be a signal. All along the street windows and doors popped open and heads popped out, but nobody ventured out of the houses.

"What's the trouble now?" Major Edouart asked the little girl.

She bestowed upon him another blast of language.

"She says," he translated, "that the rich man is coming."

At one end of the long street appeared the figure of a man, who seemed to be scooting. More than that, he was sleuthing. He crept forward and with many gestures with his hands and his rifle he spied out the lay of the land. Then he turned and waved at some one back of him behind a bend in the road, and presently another man joined him. Both, as they came nearer and nearer to the market place, were seen to be veritable walking arsenals. They carried rifles and stuck in their belts were swords whose great, bare blades gleamed in the sunlight. Bandoliers from which peeped innumerable cartridges were swung across their chests, and hanging from various strategic points of their clothing were a dozen and more oblong affairs of metal—homemade Montenegrin bombs, terrible things that are likely to explode at any minute, and when they do they send their destructive forces upward, downward and sidewise, in all directions.

The moving picture camera was half hidden by the Americans, the driver and the cart, and the two scouts evidently didn't see it. They came forward steadily, and presently around the bend in the road came a small parade—a tall, heavily bearded, exceedingly pompous man, striding fiercely along in the centre of the street, with two heavily armed riflemen on either side of him, another in front of him and a sixth behind him.

Major Edouart turned to the little girl.

"She says," he translated, "that this is a very great man, the richest man in the world! I guess we'd better 'shoot' him."

They quickly moved the camera into the centre of the market place and awaited the coming of the parade. By this time heads were showing from almost every door and window of the village. It was evident that the comings and goings o' the great man and his fearsom bodyguard were matters of great community interest and pride. Exclamations of awe and admiration came from the people as they crowded to the fronts of their houses to see the great man pass, and Major Edouart cranked vigorously at the motion picture camera. The light was good and it should be a fine picture.

But the people about the market place saw what he was doing. It was extraordinary that a stranger should stand in the centre of their village, point a curious machine at the pride of the town and turn a crank. A great shouting went up, and it came to the ears of the great man and his retinue. They looked and saw the camera with Major Edouart standing behind it turning the crank.

The bearded man immediately squatted in the middle of the road and his fierce retainers gathered about him, forming a solid phalanx and effectually screening him from the lens of the motion picture machine. Then suddenly a rifle cracked and a bullet hummed and crackled its way through the air above Major Edouart's head, and then another crashed into the side of the cart.

"Duck!" cried Major Swift.

"Here's life for you!" cried Major Swift, "Duck!"

Major Edouart hastily jerked the camera to the ground and joined his companion behind the ox cart, which formed a fairly effective barricade against further firing.

The great man continued to squat in the road, but presently one of his bodyguard, a fierce figure literally covered with armament, came forward into the market place and approached the ox cart behind which Major Edouart and Major Swift crouched.

The former rose and confronted the rifleman, who came to a halt some fifteen feet away, cast an uneasy glance at the camera and held his rifle ready for instant use.

"The Great One," the rifleman said, "desires to know why you are trying to cast a spell over him with your devil machine!"

"Our machine is not a devil machine," said Major Edouart with great dignity. "We have no dealings with devils! This machine brings long life and prosperity. Whoever is fortunate enough to come within the influence of our great machine will have much success in the world, and will be enriched with vast treasure, and will command the respect of his neighbors!"

"You swear it?"

"On my honor as an American," replied the Major. "Tell the Great One that in my country we have heard much of his wisdom and his vast wealth, and I have come hither by command of President Wilson to endow him with the benefits that can be conferred only by my great machine!"

"Ah!" cried the rifleman. "Wilson! Americans!"

CAPT. MERLE LA VOY, ONE of the RED CROSS CAMERA-MEN. THE ONLY MAN to TAKE MOVIES OF THE TURKISH SULTANS HAREM

TAKING MOVIES in the SAHARA DESERT. MAJOR ALEX F. EDOUART.

"Exactly," said Major Edouart. "Bid the Great One proceed on his journey. We do not come to cast a spell over him."

The rifleman executed a most complicated and gorgeous salute, and then ran back to where the great man still squatted uncomfortably in the Montenegrin dust. There arose then among the retainers of the Great One a tremendous clatter of conversation, apparently a discussion of the relative merits of negotiation and massacre, but at length the great man himself stilled the clamor with uplifted hand. He then rose to his feet, his bodyguard arranged itself about him, and he proceeded with great dignity into the market place, the procession coming to a halt in front of the ox cart.

Casting a Spell for Success.

It was a simple enough matter for Major Edouart after that. Moving picture men who scour the far corners of the earth for interesting pictures, who visit the districts where fear and ignorance and superstition are the common lot, must be glib and convincing talkers if they are to succeed—and it was a great tribute to the glibness of Major Edouart and his companion that within fifteen minutes the Great One and his bodyguard were marching and counter marching in front of the motion picture camera, in order that they might absorb the beneficent rays of the strange machine and so become rich and powerful in the land.

By dint of much questioning Major Edouart learned that the Great One was an Albanian, the richest man in all of Albania and one of the most powerful of the native leaders. But the war had played havoc with his power and his treasure. The Italians had come into the country, driven away his herds and flocks and taken him prisoner. In one of the towns on the Albanian coast the Great One had been imprisoned, but he had stabbed his guard and escaped into the mountains, where he was joined by a few of his devoted followers. He had then made his way into Montenegro, and was now leading a life of pompous importance in the little town of Rieka, waiting until it was safe for him to return to Albania.

The fame of the Great One had gone before him, and he was a personage of tremendous importance in Rieka. He had never seen a motion picture camera, and he had never heard of one. He was tremendously impressed by the whir of the strange machine as Major Edouart turned the crank. He wanted to buy it. The Major refused to sell it. The Great One then said that he would take it anyway, but gave up the idea when Major Edouart threatened him with the wrath of America and an invasion of men armed with devil machines, who would cast a terrible spell over the entire land.

Major Edouart and Major Swift are one of six moving picture teams which the bureau of motion pictures of the American Red Cross maintains overseas "shooting" scenes such as their experience tells them would be interesting to American audiences and aid in furthering the relief work of the Red Cross. All of the teams are headquartered in Europe, and they have gone all over the continent and into out of the way places where the inhabitants never heard of motion pictures and where any sort of strange machine is a devil machine come to cast a spell over them and blight their crops and cause ruin and famine and death.

Major Edouart particularly has come in contact with this sort of thing, because a great deal of his work has been done in the Balkans, and there is no other place in the world, with the exception of interior Africa, where fear and ignorance and superstition hold such sway. Time after time he has been in danger of his life in getting pictures which to an American audience, with no knowledge of the difficulties involved in putting the scene on the silver sheet, are but ordinary pictures of life in a Balkan village. He has taken many pictures of strange and curious things, but in letters which he has written back home he has said that there is just one picture which he will never forget.

The Rich Old Woman in a Cave.

Major Edouart found a colony of Montenegrin refugees living in a cave in the mountains under terrible conditions of hygiene and sanitation. He photographed them after he had with difficulty overcome their fears, and when they found that the pictures were going to that great land of milk and honey across the seas they insisted that he take separate pictures of the wealthiest inhabitant of the cave.

THE PRETTIEST GIRL in the DESERT OASIS of TOGGOURT, ALGERIAN SAHARA.

"We desire to show the great Americans," said the head man of the colony, "that we, too, have much property!"

It was then arranged that the wealthiest inhabitant should come forth with her property and be photographed. Major Edouart expected to see a dowager, perhaps a Montenegrin princess, hung and garlanded with the family jewels; he had visions of treasure of an exceeding vastness. So he carefully set up his camera in front of a rock, upon which the wealthy one was to sit surrounded by her treasure, and soon everything was ready for the picture.

Then from the cave came a wrinkled, tired old woman, and behind her a man marched carrying a hen, and after him another man carrying a squealing pig.

These were the treasure!

With an immense amount of ceremony the old woman was seated on the rock, the hen was placed in her lap and the pig was tethered at her feet.

The greater part of the work of the Red Cross photographers has been done in Europe, especially in the various war zones, but many of the teams have been sent on side trips to Asia and Africa. The most recent of these were a trip which one of the teams made to Africa to photograph the child rug weavers of the Sahara, and a journey which Harold Wyckoff and Dr. Orrin Wightman made through Russia into Siberia and to the American troops stationed at Archangel. The last named team went through Rumania also, taking pictures of the Queen doing relief work among her subjects and various phases of Rumanian life. They had but one great adventure in this country, but it was one which Dr. Wightman is not apt to forget very soon.

A Treasured Pair of Breeches.

The moving picture teams travel light, and seldom carry any clothing beyond what they wear on their backs. It was so with Dr. Wightman and Mr. Wyckoff on the Rumanian expedition. Dr. Wightman had a pair of breeches that were the apple of his eye, heavy English whipcord, made by one of the best tailors in London at a fabulous cost. He felt, and rightly, that his breeches were worth all the rest of the equipment put together.

They arrived one night at a small Rumanian village, and when morning came Dr. Wightman's priceless breeches were missing. Circumstances prevented him from joining in the search for them, but Wyckoff aroused the whole village and was unable to locate them. Finally the local police were called in, and a great bearded detective—the other member of the force besides the chief—was sent to the hotel to find the missing wearing apparel. He came into the presence of Dr. Wightman, and the doctor stared at him in amazement.

"That detective," he confided to Wyckoff, "has got on my pants!"

It required considerable negotiation to induce the bearded Rumanian cop to surrender them. It developed that he had purchased them at an enormous price from one of the servants of the hotel, and he considered therefore that they were his property. Questions of previous ownership did not disturb him; he had bought them, therefore he owned them.

Superstitious Fears in Russia.

The Wyckoff-Wightman team had to combat ignorance and superstition and Bolshevism throughout Russia. The natives were so fearful of the strange moving picture camera that they wouldn't come within many feet of it without making the sign of the cross to protect themselves against a possible evil spell—they thought the clicking lens was the evil eye—and the Bolshevik commissaries who ruled the small towns gave them no end of trouble. It was always necessary not only to grease their palms with much gold but to photograph them in various pompous poses. The photographers, too, had to promise faithfully that when the pictures were shown there would be titles on them proclaiming the Bolsheviks as saviors of humanity.

In Archangel and northern Siberia Mr. Wyckoff and Dr. Wightman found very cold weather. The highest temperature while they were there was 32 degrees below zero. Several times their fingers were frosted while taking pictures, and on one occasion when a battalion of Canadian troops filed in front of the camera a great many of the soldiers came out of the manœuvre with frozen hands and feet. They found however, that the Americans were warmly dressed and well fed. The only criticism Mr. Wyckoff had to offer in a conversation with the writer the other day was that the army authorities had put heavy soles on the otherwise soft boots issued to the troops. The soles retained the cold and caused a number of frozen feet, and they also made travelling over the ice very difficult.

The Red Cross uniforms worn by the photographers and the fame of the Red Cross everywhere has enabled them to obtain pictures that ordinarily they would never have been able to get, and they have sent back films that have been the ambition of the news reel camera men for years. One of the best things in this line was done by Captain Merle LaVoy, who made the first motion pictures of the Sultan of Turkey and the interior of his harem and the royal palace. He also photographed the whirling dervishes, and obtained fine pictures of various Moslem religious ceremonies, including the Sacrifice of the Seven Sheep in a Constantinople mosque.

Motion Picturing the Sultan.

Photographing the Sultan, and especially the interior of the Sultan's harem, was an undertaking to daunt the hardiest moving picture man. But by virtue of the Red Cross uniform and by a liberal application of the recognized treatment for itching palm Capt. La Voy finally obtained royal permission to take movies of the Sultan and his household, including the beauties of the harem. The photographer, being an industrious reader of the Arabian Nights and being also familiar with the gorgeous harems constructed by moving picture producers for their great Oriental dramas, had visions of dark eyed houris and languishing beauties, but alas! the beauties of the Sultan's harem were not such as brought forth the ravings of the descriptive artists who wrote the Arabian Nights. A great many of them, unfortunately, were fat, and a great many more showed a decided tendency to frowsiness. However, Capt. La Voy photographed them and took pictures of the Sultan signing important documents and walking in his garden and doing all manner of things, and when he had finished he made sufficient exposures to set before the American people the whole household machinery of the Sublime Porte and head of the Moslem faith. It had never been done before.

Taking pictures of interesting scenes throughout the far corners of the world, however, is not the only task of the Red Cross picture makers. The bureau was organized at the beginning of the war with W. E. Waddell as director as an agency for the spread of Red Cross propaganda, and it is still used largely for this purpose. That is to say, whenever it is possible a picture is made to tell, somewhere, a Red Cross story and carry a Red Cross message, although this cannot be done, of course, with purely scenic views. But many reels have been taken showing Red Cross work and the efforts of the great mother to heal the sick and distressed in all parts of the world. These pictures are propaganda pictures because they show the American people what the Red Cross is doing with their money; yet at the same time they are proof that the money is being well spent and wisely.

Five Thousand Entered in Pigeon Derby

INVENTORS of airplanes who conceived the notion of human flights from the fast flying crow and the carrier pigeon are, in spite of all their great skill, able to do honor to the latter for the splendid reliability shown as a carrier, for these men of genius realize that apart from the airplane there is as yet no swifter messenger of the air.

At the big homing pigeon Derby to be run next month in St. Louis it is expected that the birds will record a speed of at least a mile a minute. Great interest is being shown in this race by pigeon fanciers all over this country and Europe. Belgium, where pigeon racing amounts to a national sport, will have representatives at St. Louis to witness the all day race on September 25.

Five thousand birds have been entered for this race, and are now busily engaged in making daily trial flights, each day increasing by a few miles their flying record.

For the actual race these fleet little messengers will be released in pairs from 2,500 villages and towns within a 500 mile radius of St. Louis. This big number of towns covers a representation of twenty-four States, and from these towns and States the racers will carry messages tucked under their tiny wings, and made secure by a bit of sealing wax, from the Mayor or other local official to the Governor of Missouri.

These messages will be received by Gov. Gardner, who will act with others in judging the race and awarding the prizes. He will be assisted in this by Frank P. Lucke, president of the International Federation of American Homing Pigeon Fanciers, and by officers of the pigeon division of the United States Signal Corps, who likewise are showing a keen interest in the race. In fact, their cooperation to the big Derby is being given in many ways. For instance, in the huge work of training, in the daily trial flights, the army recruiting stations within a few hundred miles of St. Louis are assisting greatly by releasing the pigeons for their homeward flight at the precise hour.

The war suddenly brought the pigeon to the front again as a messenger of the first rank and transformed pigeon flying from a sport into an important branch of the army service. Pigeon enthusiasts believe that the big race will do much to sustain the enthusiasm in the United States for pigeon flying that was roused by the part pigeons played as "runners" in the A. E. F.

Officers of the United States Army are loud in praise of the part the little feathered messengers played in the world war. The Signal Corps pigeon section had more than 12,000 birds and numbered twenty officers and 542 enlisted men.

In the St. Mihiel drive 567 American birds were used. Of the 202 used in tank work 24 were killed in action. In the Argonne offensive 442 birds were used and 403 important messages delivered.

During the St. Louis Derby officers of the pigeon division of the Signal Corps will exhibit several of the hero birds that saw service in France and have been cited for bravery and awarded Distinguished Service Cross. Among these will be "President Wilson," who reached his loft on the French front with an important message after having his right leg shot off by a German sniper.

"The Mocker," another veteran of the world war, will also attend the St. Louis Derby. "The Mocker" is perhaps the most famous of all the hero birds. It was he that on the Beaumont front September, 1918, reached the rear with a message giving the location of advancing German batteries. This information enabled American artillerymen to silence the enemy guns in twenty minutes. This little hero returned to his loft covered with blood, with one eye shot away.

"Spike," another hero bird that will be among the distinguished guests at the big race, has the record of having carried fifty-two war messages. He came out of the war unscathed.

Many of the pedigreed birds who will take part in the race are from this sort of stock. They were all bred and are now lodged in the great loft built expressly for this purpose by the United Drug Company at St. Louis. The pigeon Derby will represent a feature of the annual convention of eight thousand druggists.

RemakingNewZealand

MORE rapid changes in animal and vegetable life are taking place in New Zealand than almost anywhere else in the world. The native Polynesian race is disappearing before the European; the native wild animals amount to little in contest with the imported species, many of which now run wild; the streams are full of American and European trout, which attain an enormous size, and even the forests are being replaced by the planting of foreign trees as the native ones disappear.

Eleven million larches, oaks, spruces, Douglas firs and eucalyptus have already been planted and vast numbers of seedlings are coming in all the time. The reason for replacing the native trees with species from the United States, Europe and Australia is that those of New Zealand are too slow of growth, although some of them produce excellent timber. The implantations thrive everywhere.